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An Essay on
Irritation.

Respectfully Submitted
to the Faculty of The
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of
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By
Bachelder Bell

of
Knoxhagan
Somerset County
Maine.

Irritation.

There are some many
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obvious indications.

These are the men who
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They make the man who is sick,

Irritation.

There are some men, even of our own school of Medicine, who never see any but the most objective indications.

These are the men who enter the sick room as they would a counting room, having their thoughts and cares more upon what they shall make by the operation, than upon the claims of their patient upon them for a kind word and a cheering smile which are often more than medicine.

These are the men who overlook

almost entirely, the subtle power of mind over matter, of mental states and conditions to aggravate and alleviate, if not to cause and to cure disease and who thus altogether neglect to use this power in the treatment of disease.

These are the men who can see nothing but tinctures and crude drugs and to whom the wonderful truth of dynamic powers in medicine and in disease is at best but a fine spun theory.

Such men as these can have no true conception, no true appreciation of our beautiful and unfailing law.

They are unfit to go forth into the world to bear aloft the shining light and the

glorious banner of Homoeopathy.

Committed to such men the light will be lost amid the mists of error. the banner will be trailed in the dust.

And men of this cast of mind are those who regard Irritation as a subject of minor importance, or at best but a good subject for an introductory lecture, a sort of preface to subjects of greater interest and importance.

This is a most vital mistake, a weakness in the foundation which will be sure to display itself sooner or later by a fissure in the superstructure.

What then is Irritation that it is worthy so much consideration?

Irritation is the first note of distress from a suffering organism. The first warning that all is not right, and to the observing and intelligent Physician the language is distinct and intelligible.

But laying aside all simile, let us study carefully the Nature, Causes, Termination and Treatment of Irritation.

In thus dividing our subject it is not with the expectation of rigidly separating it under these heads; for it is a subject which does not well admit of it;—but only that we may be a little more systematic and have a well defined idea of what we are seeking for.

Irritation may be defined to be any abnormal impression producing a derangement of the physiological

actions of the animal economy.

Our Physiology and Pathology of the nervous system must necessarily be rather more of a negative than of a positive character. Dissection shows us almost nothing. The arteries and veins at once suggest to us their office but of what use are those solid white cords, those ganglia and that mass of brain. They surely do not convey a liquid like the vessels; they are not means of motion like the muscles. Other parts and organs of the system we can sometimes see in action, but these never. We are left then to infer that offices which can be traced to nothing else must be performed by these. Nor is this reasoning as loose as it might first appear. for

reasoning thus. we think we know that the course of irritation is through the nervous system and probably principally through the great sympathetic, the semi-lunar ganglion, situated behind the stomach. The whole nervous system, consisting, beside the sympathetic of the brain and spinal cord with their nerves, is of course, always involved.

The susceptibility of different persons and ages to the effects of irritation varies greatly. Thus, in child hood, the system is extremely sensitive and irritation is thereby very readily induced, often ending too, in convulsions and death.

The familiar example occurring in dentition is one to the point. This apparently simple process nearly always

Produces a high degree of irritation which if not controlled is very liable to end in death, either from congestion of the brain or by diarrhoea. In operations also upon children under two years of age we must always be on the lookout for irritation, even though the operation be no more serious than those for hare-lip or for the removal of naevi.

The temperament of the patient also must have great influence upon his susceptibility to irritation. The study of temperaments in all their combinations and their influence in disease, is one by all means too much neglected. The Physician who does not understand this labors under great difficulty in the selection of his remedy and still more in the selection of his attenuation.

The same operation which would give exquisite pain to a person in whom the mental or nervous temperament predominated, would be much less keenly felt in one in whom the bilious or motive was most prominent. The same rule holds good with regard to the irritation following such an operation.

Habits also must be taken into consideration in forming a prognosis in a case of irritation. Intemperate persons will often sink under the first shock of an injury from which a temperate man would readily recover. There is now a man in the Pennsylvania Hospital, - a man of confirmed intemperate habits, - who is suffering from the effects of a severe burn. He is only kept alive by a very free use of stimulants, while a temperate man would probably recover from the

Same injury with but a moderate degree of irritation, and would, perhaps require no stimulation at all.

Anything which tends in any way to depress the vital powers will cause irritation to be more readily induced. Thus it is that small wounds which at one time will heal readily and with no constitutional effects, will at another time produce an irritation ending in tetanus or in inflammation, suppuration, and death. It has been remarked that students are in much more danger from dissecting wounds toward the close of the term than they are at first, when fresh from their homes and before they are worn down with study or by a change of habits and climate.

Irritation may be either local or general. When local, it is manifested

principally by pain at first, as in the case of a splinter in the finger or a foreign body in any part of the system. This is followed by inflammation - if the foreign substance is not removed - and then by suppuration. There are also local irritations which do not tend to suppuration, or always to inflammation, as, ascarides producing painful itching in the rectum, the pressure of corns, or of an ingrowing toe nail upon the sensitive tissue beneath.

But the most important thing to understand in connection with local irritation is the transmission of such irritation, or the sensation of it, to another part, by sympathy or most probably by direct nervous connection. Examples of this are very numerous and very interesting, as may be instanced, the irritation of the nose in children from the presence of worms

in the intestinal canal; the disagreeable sensations at the end of the penis from stone in the bladder and thus often resulting in elongation of the prepuce from constant pulling, especially in children; the pain at the inner side of the knee in hip disease; the spasmodic vomiting resulting from blows upon the head, and perhaps also headache from gastric irritation; the pain between the shoulders in affections of the liver, and many more. It will be seen at once how important these symptoms are as diagnostic signs, if understood, and to what mistakes they will lead if not understood.

Of general irritation one of the best examples is that before mentioned of the irritative fever of dentition. Also the fainting often seen upon passing a catheter or bougie for the first time and hectic is also a good example.

General irritation may occur and may cause death in three ways. First by a continued irritation like that of hectic. the system may be worn out. Second in the more severe form by a super ~~excitation~~ ending in a typhoid state. Third in the most severe form by a shock which is never recovered from.

Hectic may be called the type of the first form. The symptoms are chilliness followed by heat. Pulse quite full and quick. Skin hot and dry. great thirst. Tongue nearly natural or red and glistening and sometimes a little white fur in the middle. This stage is followed by profuse sweating or what is a more symptom a colligative diarrhoea. These paroxysms occur once in twenty four hours commencing toward evening and ending in

Sweat toward morning. Sometimes these symptoms are much less marked as in the irritation following scalds and burns. There is great debility between the febrile paroxysms. The patient dies from exhaustion.

Irritation following a severe injury, as a compound fracture, is the best example of the second form. - The patient first feels an uneasiness in the loins, soon amounting to pain, which extends along the back, in the spinal cord, up to the cerebrum. He becomes more restless, and has an anxious expression. The tongue is at first covered with a whitish fur, which as the irritation increases becomes yellow, and at length, toward the close of a dark brown color. Now follows diminution or complete suppression of all secretions. The suppression of bile and intestinal secretions causes constipation. The urine is scanty and

high colored. Perpiration is stopped and the skin is hot and dry. The pulse rises and becomes hard and irregular. The respiration is hurried and laborious. The functions of the brain and spinal cord become more disturbed. Subcultus tendinum ensues. The slightest impressions upon the senses become almost intolerable. The mind becomes clouded and the patient sinks into a low muttering delirium. Then the great Sympathetic becomes more deeply involved. The abdomen becomes tympanitic vomiting and purging set in. then hiccough and death.

In the last form death follows from a severe shock to the nervous system such as is given by all severe injuries, and sometimes by a blow over the epigastrium affecting the great Sympathetic and causing almost instant death.

The treatment of irritation must of course depend upon the cause which produced it and upon its degree and character. The first indication is of course in all cases to remove the cause if possible. In local irritation this is generally sufficient. In general irritation the causes can not often be removed but they must have great weight in the selection of a remedy. We must not overlook or forget causes which are often more important and powerful than any before mentioned. We refer to emotional or passional influences. Fear, anger, grief and abuse of the sexual instinct often cause most destructive irritation.

The general remedies for irritation are Aconite, Chamomilla, Staphysagria, China, Phosphoric Acid, Nux Vomica and Coffea.

Aconite is required when fear is the cause.
Chamomilla is indicated in irritation arising from anger with derangement of the biliary secretions. This is one of our most powerful remedies for controlling irritation however induced or in whatever age manifesting itself, but especially useful in children, as in the irritation resulting from dentition. It should be given from the 6th to 18th attenuation, never lower.

Staphysagria is required for the irritation resulting from grief.

China and Phosphoric Acid are the most important remedies for irritation resulting from excess of venery or from masturbation.

Nux Vomica may also be required for the spinal irritation arising from the above causes.

Coffea will always be useful when there is restlessness and want of sleep.

Other remedies may be required for occasional conditions but in a paper like this we can only give the more general indications.

Half our Materia Medica might be given with a symptom for each remedy but we trust that the time is passing and has passed when homoeopathic literature shall longer be filled with symptoms. and symptoms alone.